

## Poetry in Nature

*Jill P. May*

At the end of this odd year—ending in 17 and having all sorts of political and natural upheavals—we wanted to consider the ways we could talk with youngsters about the beauty in the world around them. We might have chosen to look for books that depicted family or community relationships in strong, positive ways, but we felt that earlier issues of *First Opinions*, *Second Reactions* had successfully approached those ideals. We could have turned back to history—after all, this is the last issue this year—but we wanted to look for a more imperturbable landscape that might be glancing into the future, one that allowed children hope rather than despair. Looking through the stacks of books published this year, we noticed a good group of picture books with positive imagery and poetic language. This was, we felt, the best way to end the year!

The editorial staff of this journal has always been blessed with willing professional voices who would agree to pick up a book we wanted them to read, consider its merits, and write a review that would depend upon their expertise in children's and adolescent literature. We have also been blessed with knowledgeable teachers and parents who could guide us in possible ways the books might be shared with youthful audiences. This issue holds just that sort of expertise. Often the reviewers showed us new ways of thinking about the books we had selected. It was comforting to know that publishers were still willing to create quality literature with excellent illustrations, diagrams, and formats for our youthful readers. The books that passed over our desks this year affirmed publishers' continued support for information that expanded the world of the child and led the reader or viewer of their books to new insights about our world.

As I sat down to write this editorial and talked with Ann Koci, our able assistant who actually does most of the work to make each issue of our journal work, we noted that almost all of this issue's reviewers had commented on the poetic language and exceptional imagery in the books we gave them to review. Why was nature entwined in our visual and emotional response to our world? I scanned several places on the Internet to see what I could find, and I hit upon my answer on the website for the Academy of American Poets. On the page discussing nature poetry, I read:

It was the tradition of natural poetry that William Wordsworth had in mind when he proposed that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." This tranquil state might be most easily inspired if the poet would go out into nature, observe the world around him, and translate those emotions and observations into verse.

Our reviewers saw that sense of tranquility and inspiration in the books they were given. They also saw ties to studies in nature, science, and caring. But don't take my word for it! Read the reviews and see for yourself what the publishers have given us to translate "emotions and observations" in progressive, positive ways.

### Work Cited

"Nature Poems." *Academy of American Poets*, 21 Feb. 2014, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/nature-poems>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.